IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CIARA DICKERSON :

1333 Elson Rd. :

Brookhaven, PA 19015 : CIVIL ACTION

.

Plaintiff, : No.:

Defendant.

v. : JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, INC. : 3401 N. Broad St. :

Philadelphia, PA 19140

CIVIL ACTION COMPLAINT

Ciara Dickerson (hereinafter referred to as "Plaintiff," unless indicated otherwise), by and through her undersigned counsel, hereby avers as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. Plaintiff has initiated this action to redress violations by Defendant, Temple University Hospital (hereinafter "Defendant") of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VII" – 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000(d) *et. seq*) and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act ("PHRA"). As a direct consequence of Defendant's unlawful actions, Plaintiff seeks damages as set forth herein.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This Court has original subject matter jurisdiction over the instant action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343(a)(4) because it arises under the laws of the United States and seeks

¹ Plaintiff's claims under the PHRA are referenced herein for notice purposes. Plaintiff intends to amend her complaint to include claims pending before the Pennsylvania Human Relation Commission ("PHRC") once such claims are fully and administratively exhausted. Plaintiff's PHRA claims will identically mirror her Title VII claims asserted herein.

redress for violations of federal laws. There lies supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's future state law claims because they arise out of the same common nucleus of operative facts as Plaintiff's federal claims asserted herein.

- 3. This Court may properly assert personal jurisdiction over Defendant because its contacts with this state and this judicial district are sufficient for the exercise of jurisdiction over Defendant to comply with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice, satisfying the standard set forth by the United States Supreme Court in *Int'l Shoe Co. v. Washington*, 326 U.S. 310 (1945), and its progeny.
- 4. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(1) and (b)(2), venue is properly laid in this district because Defendant is deemed to reside where it is subject to personal jurisdiction, rendering Defendant a resident of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.
- 5. Plaintiff is proceeding herein under Title VII, after properly exhausting all administrative remedies with respect to such claims by timely filing a Charge of Discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") and by filing the instant lawsuit within ninety (90) days of receiving a notice of dismissal and/or right to sue letter from the EEOC.

PARTIES

- 6. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
 - 7. Plaintiff is an adult individual who resides at the address as set forth in the caption.
 - 8. Defendant is an academic medical center located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 9. At all times relevant, Defendant acted through its agents, servants and employees, who acted within the scope of their authority, course of employment, and under the direct control of Defendant.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

- 10. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
 - 11. Plaintiff was hired by Defendant on or about November 9, 2020.
- 12. At all times during her employment with Defendant, Plaintiff worked as a Certified Surgical Technician.
 - 13. Plaintiff is Muslim and practices the religion of Islam.
- 14. During her employment with Defendant, Plaintiff was supervised by several individuals; however, she consistently reported to Qamra Williams (hereinafter "Williams")
- 15. According to Williams' LinkedIn profile, Williams served as a Service Line Manager from September of 2020 through December of 2021 and a Senior Nurse Manager from December of 2021 until December of 2024 (the relevant time periods of Plaintiff's employment).
- 16. In or about May of 2021, Plaintiff requested religious accommodations from Defendant's Human Resources ("HR") department and Williams, in the form of being excused from participating in certain surgical procedures.
- 17. Specifically, there were three (3) surgical procedures that Plaintiff requested not to be assigned to because of her religious beliefs: (1) gender affirmation surgery; (2) abortions; and (3) harvesting organs.
- 18. While Plaintiff was granted the accommodations not to be assigned to gender affirmation surgeries and abortions, she was not granted the accommodation related to procedures for harvesting organs.
- 19. Starting in or about September of 2023 (after Plaintiff began working night shift), she was sporadically assigned cases related to harvesting organs.

- 20. The procedures for harvesting organs that Plaintiff was assigned were cases where the individual had his/her kidneys and liver removed but maintained his/her heart and lungs.
- 21. With these aforesaid cases, the patient whose organs were being removed was brought to the Operation Room ("OR") after they had already passed away.
- 22. After the deceased individual was brought to the OR, there would be a moment of silence/prayer.
- 23. Plaintiff made it known to management that she did not feel comfortable staying for the moment of silence because of her religious beliefs and requested to be excused for these moments.
- 24. The aforesaid religious accommodation request was never an issue, and Plaintiff was always permitted to leave during the moment of silence and then return when it was over.
- 25. Therefore, even though Plaintiff was forced to participate in procedures for harvesting organs, she was never made to stay for the moment of silence.
- 26. As Plaintiff began being forced to participate in procedures related to harvesting organs, she started to express concern to Defendant's management regarding the reason why her accommodation request (to not participate in harvesting organs procedures) had not been granted.
- 27. The last time Plaintiff expressed concern about Defendant's refusal to accommodate her religious beliefs (as aforesaid) was to Williams in or about July/August of 2024,
- 28. The last time Plaintiff expressed concern about Defendant's refusal to accommodate her religious beliefs (as aforesaid) came shortly after she had been asked by Defendant's Senior HR Coordinator, Compliance, Jamal Reeves-Snead, if she still needed her religious accommodations (to which she responded in the affirmative).

- 29. In response to Plaintiff's expressed concerns, she was simply told that in order to work for Defendant, she was required to participate in procedures related to harvesting organs.
- 30. In or about mid-August of 2024, Plaintiff was assigned to a case related to harvesting organs.
- 31. However, this particular case was different than any case Plaintiff had been assigned to previously, as the patient was having all of his organs removed and was being brought to the OR still alive (but ready to pass).
- 32. Plaintiff had never been trained for this type of procedure (as discussed in Paragraph 31 of the instant Civil Action Complaint).
- 33. After this particular patient was brought into the OR, there was a moment of silence and prayer while the patient's family was waiting for him to pass.
- 34. As was Plaintiff's practice previously during moments of silence, she informed the manager, Darrell (last name unknown) that she was going to excuse herself.
- 35. Darrell was aware of Plaintiff's religious beliefs and her previous accommodation requests.
- 36. Darrell did not indicate that Plaintiff had to stay, and there were several other employees of Defendant and a representative from the Gift of Life in the OR when Plaintiff excused herself.
- 37. Darell was aware at all times that Plaintiff was in the break room (approximately 10 feet from the OR), waiting for the moment of silence/family prayer to be over.
- 38. After the patient passed away, Darrell called Plaintiff back into the OR and the surgical team completed the procedure.

- 39. Following this procedure, Plaintiff was informed that she was being suspended, pending an investigation, for leaving the OR during the moment of silence/family prayer while waiting for the patient to pass away.
- 40. Again, Plaintiff was never told it was an issue for her to leave during the moment of silence/family prayer, she had done so previously on many occasions, and the reason for her absence during this time was related to her religious beliefs.
- 41. The only thing different during this occasion was that the patient had not passed away yet.
- 42. However, when Plaintiff told Darrell she was leaving for the moment of silence/while the family was praying, she was not told to stay or told that if she did not stay, she would be subject to discipline or termination.
- 43. Plaintiff was placed on suspension for the aforesaid reasons on or about August 15, 2024.
- 44. Upon information and belief, approximately one month after being placed on suspension, the policy was written to state that surgical techs do not need to be in the room while the patient is waiting to pass away.
- 45. Regardless of (1) her religious beliefs, management's knowledge and approval of her religious accommodation request to leave the room during the moment of silence and/or family prayer, (2) the fact that this was a new procedure for Plaintiff for which she had not been trained or had experience with prior, and (3) the updated policy that surgical techs do not need to be in the room while the patient is waiting to pass away, Defendant still made the decision to terminate Plaintiff's employment on or about October 3, 2024.

- 46. Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that she was placed on suspension and ultimately terminated because of her religion, in retaliation for requesting religious accommodations, and/or for expressing concerns about Defendant's failure to accommodate her religious beliefs.
 - 47. Plaintiff also believes the Defendant failed to accommodate her religious beliefs.

COUNT I <u>Violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VII")</u> ([1] Religious Discrimination; [2] Retaliation; [3] Failure to Accommodate)

- 48. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 49. Plaintiff is a Muslim individual, who practices the Islam faith and requested a religious accommodation during her employment with Defendant which Defendant only partially granted.
- 50. Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that her religion was a motivating or determinative factor in Defendant's decision to suspend her and then terminate her employment.
- 51. Plaintiff also believes and therefore avers that she was suspended and ultimately terminated in retaliation for requesting a religious accommodation and/or for objecting to Defendant's failure to accommodate her religious beliefs.
- 52. Finally, Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that Defendant failed to accommodate her religious beliefs and/or suspended/terminated her as a direct result of their failure to engage in the interactive process and/or accommodate her religious beliefs.
 - 53. The actions of Defendant as aforesaid constitute violations of Title VII.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that this Court enter an Order providing that:

- A. Defendant is to promulgate and adhere to a policy prohibiting discrimination and retaliation in the future against any employee(s);
- B. Defendant is to compensate Plaintiff, reimburse Plaintiff, and make Plaintiff whole for any and all pay, and benefits Plaintiff would have received had it not been for Defendant's illegal actions, including but not limited to back pay, front pay, salary, pay increases, bonuses, insurance, benefits, training, promotions, reinstatement and seniority;
- C. Plaintiff is to be awarded punitive damages, as permitted by applicable law, in an amount believed by the Court or trier of fact to be appropriate to punish Defendant for its willful, deliberate, malicious and outrageous conduct and to deter Defendant from engaging in such misconduct in the future;
- D. Plaintiff is to be accorded equitable and legal relief as the Court deems just, proper and appropriate (including but not limited to damages for emotional distress, pain, suffering and humiliation);
- E. Plaintiff is to be awarded the costs and expenses of this action and reasonable attorney's fees as provided by applicable federal and state law; and
- F. Plaintiff demands trial by jury on all issues so triable consistent with Fed. R. Civ. P. 38(a)(1).

Respectfully submitted,

KARPF, KARPF & CERUTTI, P.C.

By:

Ari R. Karpf, Esq. 8 Interplex Drive, Suite 210 Feasterville-Trevose, PA 19053 (215) 639-0801

(215) 639-0801 akarpf@karpf-law.com

Dated: June 30, 2025

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

Telephone	FAX Number	E-Mail Address				
215-639-0801	215-639-4970	akarpf@karpf-law.com				
Date	Attorney-at-law	Attorney for				
6/30/2025	-1	Plaintiff				
(f) Standard Management – (Cases that do not fall into a	any one of the other tracks.	(x)			
		cial or intense management by	()			
(d) Asbestos – Cases involving claims for personal injury or property damage from exposure to asbestos.						
(c) Arbitration – Cases required to be designated for arbitration under Local Civil Rule 53.2.						
(b) Social Security – Cases requesting review of a decision of the Secretary of Health and Human Services denying plaintiff Social Security Benefits.						
a) Habeas Corpus – Cases brought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 through § 2255.						
SELECT ONE OF THE FO	LLOWING CASE MANA	AGEMENT TRACKS:				
plaintiff shall complete a Cas filing the complaint and serve side of this form.) In the ex designation, that defendant sh	e Management Track Designation on all defendants. (See that a defendant does nall, with its first appearancies, a Case Management T	y Reduction Plan of this court, counse gnation Form in all civil cases at the tir See § 1:03 of the plan set forth on the renot agree with the plaintiff regarding ce, submit to the clerk of court and ser track Designation Form specifying the gned.	ne of verse said ve on			
Γemple University Hospital, Inc. : NO.						
V.	:	NO				
Ciara Dickerson	: :	CIVIL ACTION				

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

DESIGNATION FORM

Place of Accident, Incident, or Transaction: Defendants place of business

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RELAT	ED CASE IF ANY: Case Number:	Judge:					
1.	1. Does this case involve property included in an earlier numbered suit?						
2.	2. Does this case involve a transaction or occurrence which was the subject of an earlier numbered suit?						
3.	3. Does this case involve the validity or infringement of a patent which was the subject of an earlier numbered suit? Yes						
4.	4. Is this case a second or successive habeas corpus petition, social security appeal, or pro se case filed by the same individual?						
5.	5. Is this case related to an earlier numbered suit even though none of the above categories apply? Yes If yes, attach an explanation.						
I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the within case \square is $/ \times$ is not related to any pending or previously terminated action in this court.							
Civil Li	igation Categories						
A.	Federal Question Cases:	B. Diversity Jurisdiction Cases:					
beyond federal	 Indemnity Contract, Marine Contract, and All Other Contracts) FELA Jones Act-Personal Injury Antitrust Wage and Hour Class Action/Collective Action Patent Copyright/Trademark Employment Labor-Management Relations Civil Rights Habeas Corpus Securities Cases Social Security Review Cases Qui Tam Cases Cases Seeking Systemic Relief *see certification below* All Other Federal Question Cases. (Please specify): that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that the remedy so the parties before the court and does / X does not seek to be aw including a rule, regulation, policy, or order of the executive and/or any form of injunctive relief. 	oar or mandate statewide or nationwide enforcement of	cations of a state or				
Juagme	it and/or any form of injunctive tener.						
	ARBITRATION CERTIFICATION (CE	IECK ONLY ONE BOX BELOW)					
1 certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief: X Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 53.2(3), this case is not eligible for arbitration either because (1) it seeks relief other than money damages; (2) the money damages sought are in excess of \$150,000 exclusive of interest and costs; (3) it is a social security case, includes a prisoner as a party, or alleges a violation of a right secured by the U.S. Constitution, or (4) jurisdiction is based in whole or in part on 28 U.S.C. § 1343.							
None of the restrictions in Local Civil Rule 53.2 apply and this case is eligible for arbitration.							
NOTE: A	trial de novo will be by jury only if there has been compliance with F.R.C.P. 38						

JS 44 (Rev. 04/21)

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The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

l. (a) PLAINTIFFS		DEFENDANTS					
DICKERSON, CIARA			TEMPLE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, INC.				
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Delaware			County of Residence of First Listed Defendant Philadelphia				
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)			(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)				
			NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.				
	Address, and Telephone Number)		Attorneys (If Known	n)			
	f & Cerutti, P.C., 8 Interplex Drive, Suite 210, ; 215-639-0801; akarpf@karpf-law.com						
II. BASIS OF JURISD	ICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)	III. CI	TIZENSHIP OF] (For Diversity Cases Only			Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff nd One Box for Defendant)	
1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	X 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)	Citiz		PTF 1	DEF 1 Incorporated or Pri of Business In T	PTF DEF ncipal Place 4 4	
2 U.S. Government Defendant	4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)	Citiz	en of Another State	2	2 Incorporated and P of Business In A		
			en or Subject of a reign Country	3	3 Foreign Nation	6 6	
IV. NATURE OF SUIT				_	ck here for: Nature of S		
CONTRACT 110 Insurance	TORTS PERSONAL INJURY PERSONAL INJU		DRFEITURE/PENALTY 25 Drug Related Seizure		BANKRUPTCY 422 Appeal 28 USC 158	375 False Claims Act	
120 Marine 130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable Instrument	310 Airplane 365 Personal Injury 315 Airplane Product Liability 367 Health Care/	- E	of Property 21 USC 881	1 📙	423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157	376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a)) 400 State Reapportionment	
150 Recovery of Overpayment	320 Assault, Libel & Pharmaceutical				INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS	410 Antitrust	
& Enforcement of Judgment 151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans	Slander Personal Injury 330 Federal Employers' Product Liability 368 Asbestos Person 340 Marine Injury Product				820 Copyrights 830 Patent 835 Patent - Abbreviated New Drug Application	430 Banks and Banking 450 Commerce 460 Deportation 470 Racketeer Influenced and	
(Excludes Veterans) 153 Recovery of Overpayment	345 Marine Product Liability Liability PERSONAL PROPE	DIV	LABOR		840 Trademark	Corrupt Organizations 480 Consumer Credit	
of Veteran's Benefits	350 Motor Vehicle 370 Other Fraud	7	0 Fair Labor Standards	74	880 Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016	(15 USC 1681 or 1692)	
160 Stockholders' Suits 190 Other Contract	355 Motor Vehicle 371 Truth in Lendin Product Liability 380 Other Personal	_	Act 20 Labor/Management		SOCIAL SECURITY	485 Telephone Consumer Protection Act	
195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise	360 Other Personal Property Damag	ge _	Relations 10 Railway Labor Act	F	861 HIA (1395ff) 862 Black Lung (923)	490 Cable/Sat TV 850 Securities/Commodities/	
190 Franchise	362 Personal Injury - Product Liability		1 Family and Medical	H	863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g))	Exchange	
REAL PROPERTY	Medical Malpractice CIVIL RIGHTS PRISONER PETITION	ONS 79	Leave Act O Other Labor Litigation	H	864 SSID Title XVI 865 RSI (405(g))	890 Other Statutory Actions 891 Agricultural Acts	
210 Land Condemnation	440 Other Civil Rights Habeas Corpus:	79	1 Employee Retirement			893 Environmental Matters	
220 Foreclosure 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment	441 Voting 463 Alien Detainee X 442 Employment 510 Motions to Vac:	ate	Income Security Act		FEDERAL TAX SUITS 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff	895 Freedom of Information Act	
240 Torts to Land 245 Tort Product Liability	443 Housing/ Sentence Accommodations 530 General				or Defendant) 871 IRS—Third Party	896 Arbitration 899 Administrative Procedure	
290 All Other Real Property	445 Amer. w/Disabilities - 535 Death Penalty		IMMIGRATION		26 USC 7609	Act/Review or Appeal of	
	mployment Other: 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - 540 Mandamus & O		62 Naturalization Applicati 65 Other Immigration	ion		Agency Decision 950 Constitutionality of	
	Other 550 Civil Rights 448 Education 555 Prison Conditio	_	Actions			State Statutes	
	560 Civil Detainee -						
	Conditions of Confinement						
V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in	n One Box Only) moved from 3 Remanded from	□ 4 Dain	stated or 5 Trans	eformed	from 6 Multidistri	ct	
kr1 – I I	te Court Appellate Court	Reo	(spec	her Dis :ify)	strict Litigation - Transfer	I I	
VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you Title VII (42USC2000)	are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional s	statutes	unless diversity):		
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION	Brief description of cause: Violations of Title VII and t	he PHR	A.				
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT: CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.			EMAND \$		CHECK YES only i JURY DEMAND:	f demanded in complaint: XYes No	
VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions): JUDGE				DOCKET NUMBER		
DATE 6/30/2025	STANATURE OF A	TTORNEY	OF RECORD				
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY							
	MOUNT APPLYING IFF	•	JUDGE		MAG. JUD	OGE	